

Luther Burbank House  
200 Santa Rosa Avenue  
Santa Rosa  
Sonoma County  
California

HABS No. CA-2201

HABS  
CAL,  
49-SANRO,  
4-

PHOTOGRAPHS

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

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CAL,  
49-SANRO,  
4-

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

LUTHER BURBANK HOUSE

HABS No. CA-2201

Location: 200 Santa Rosa Avenue  
Santa Rosa, Sonoma County, California

Present Owner: City of Santa Rosa

Present Occupant: Vacant

Present Use: Museum, open to the public with tours by docents

Significance: The Burbank House is significant as it was the residence of Luther Burbank during a very productive portion of his life and was the site of his early work in plant research and breeding. The house, located on a prominent street near the present commercial and administrative center of Santa Rosa, is a unique part of the City's heritage.

PART I HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Date of Erection:

The precise date is unknown, but appears to have been built between 1874 and 1884, a period of significant emigration and home building in the area.

Original and Subsequent Owners:

References to the chain of title to the land upon which the structure stands are described below, as recorded in the Office of the Recorder, Sonoma County, California. A summary list of owners and date of transactions follows the description.

OFFICE OF THE RECORDER, SONOMA COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

Deed Book #92, pages 188-89

This Indenture, Made the thirteenth day of September in the year of our Lord one thousand eight-hundred and eighty four Between Francis M. Dimmick and Catharine G. Dimmick his wife of Sonoma County and State of California, the parties of the first part and Luther Burbank, of the County of Sonoma and State of California, the party of the second part. Witnesseth: That the said parties of the first part for and in consideration of the sum of two thousand (\$2000.00) Dollars, Gold Coin of the United States of America, the payment whereof is hereby acknowledged have granted, bargained, and sold, conveyed and confirmed and by these presents do grant, bargain and sell, convey and confirm unto the said party of the second part and to his heirs and assigns forever all those certain lots and parcels of land situated in the City of Santa Rosa, County of Sonoma and State of California, described as follows to wit: Lots number one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve, eighteen, nineteen, twenty, twenty-one, twenty-two, twenty-three, twenty-four, twenty-five, twenty-six,

twenty-seven, twenty-eight, twenty-nine (1-12 and 18-29) as numbered and designated upon the "Map of B.S. Freemsn's addition to Santa Rosa" Filed in the office of the County Recorder of Sonoma County on October 25, 1875. Together with all and singular the tenements, hereditaments and appurtenances thereunto belonging or in anywise appertaining and the reversions and reversions, remainders and remainders, rents issues and profits thereof, and also all the estate, right-title, interest, property possession, claim and demand whatever as well in law as in equity and parcel thereof with the appurtenances unto the said party of the second part, his heirs and assigns forever. On Witness Whereof the said parties of the first part hereunto set their hands and seals the day and year first above written

Signed, Sealed, and Delivered

in the Presence of F.G. Nagle,

State of California

/s/Francis M. Dimmick

/s/Catherine G. Dimmick

On this thirteenth day of September in the year of our Lord one thousand eight-hundred and eighty four before me, Fred G. Nagle, a Notary Public in and for Sonoma County, personally appeared Francis M. Dimmick and Catharine G. Dimmick, his wife known to me to be the persons described in and whose names are subscribed to the annexed instrument and they acknowledged to me that they executed the same and said Catharine G. Dimmick described as a married woman and the wife of the said Francis M. Dimmick and upon an examination without the hearing of her husband I made her acquainted with the contents of the instrument and thereupon she acknowledged to me that she executed the same and that she does not wish to retract such execution. Witness my hand and official seal.

SEAL

/s/ Fred G. Nagle  
Notary Public

OFFICE OF THE RECORDER, SONOMA COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

Book 1373, page 479

Resolution #455-A

Resolution Accepting Deed Executed by Elizabeth Burbank, a widow, to the City of Santa Rosa.

It is resolved by the Council of the City of Santa Rosa that the real property described in and the Deed dated August 5, 1955 and signed by Elizabeth Burbank, a widow, be and the same is hereby accepted by the City of Santa Rosa.

In Council duly passed this sixteenth day of August, 1955.

Book 1373, page 480

Consideration less than \$100.00

Lots 1,2,3, and portions of Lots 4 and 5, as designated upon the map entitled B.S. Freeman's Addition to Santa Rosa, etc. as shown upon the map filed October 25, 1875 in Book 1 of Maps, page 13, Sonoma County Recorder's Office, and being more particularly described as follows:

Beginning at the northwest corner of said Lot1, being the intersection of the easterly line of Snata Rosa Avenue and the southerly line of Tupper Street; thence easterly, along the southerly line of Tupper Street and the northerly line of Lots 1 and 4, a distance of 164.16 feet to the point where the westerly line of the tract of land conveyed to City of Santa Rosa Junior College District by deed dated May 25, 1934, and recorded April 16, 1935 under Sonoma County Recorder's Serial No. A-5863, intersects the south line of Tupper Street; thence south 9° 22', East 111.25 feet to a point; thence south 80° 35' West 165-24 feet to the easterly line of Santa Rosa Avenue, 110-76 feet to the point of beginning/ For use for public park purposes as a memorial to Luther Burbank.

Reserving unto grantor a life estate in the above described premises.

August 15, 1955

Summary List:

1. Francis M. Dimmick  
Catharine G. Dimmick, original Onwers  
(Date unknown)
2. Luther Burbank, September 13, 1884
3. City of Santa Rosa, 1977, Assumes ownership  
based upon 1955 acceptance of deed from  
Elizabeth Burbank.

Architect and/or Builder:

Unknown. Dan Markwyn, Historian at Sonoma State University, suggests that the House may have been constructed from a plan acquired through a catalog of house patterns.

Historical Narrative:

On September 13th, 1884, nearly a decade after his arrival in California, Luther Burbank bought a four-acre plot on the southern outskirts of Santa Rosa. Soon he and his mother and sister moved into the modest house on the property. At the edge of town, immediately south of the Iron Bridge over Santa Rosa Creek and situated on the county's main north-south road, the house and property provided an ideal setting for Burbank's growing horticultural enterprise.

The house was fashioned in the modified Greek Revival tradition, bearing few architectural marks of its California site and represents instead a style carried west by emigrants who, like Burbank, sought a place where "the climate is perfect" and opportunity beckoned. In 1906, Burbank built a new and larger house on another site symbolizing his successes and left behind his smaller home of twenty years. Between 1906 and Burbank's death in 1926, the old house

served as an office for various enterprises connected with Burbank, as a storage place for seeds, and as occasional living quarters for associates of the internationally renowned horticulturist.

In 1927, the year after Burbank's death, his widow Elizabeth Burbank left the larger home and moved into the old Burbank house. In the following decade she undertook extensive remodeling of the nineteenth-century home, opening up the south wall with doors and windows and adding a bedroom on the second floor. Here Mrs. Burbank lived for fifty years until her death in June, 1977. Then the house with its evocative sense of the past became the property of the City of Santa Rosa, first visited by Luther Burbank a century before.

## PART II ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### Exterior Description:

The Luther Burbank House is a two story Greek Revival form style house sitting on its site independent of physical connection to other structures. Its form is basically rectangular with steep sloped hip roofs and dormers protruding from the second floor. The foundation appears to be a raised perimeter type constructed of concrete and brick. The foundation and substructure raise the floor approximately two feet above ground and this portion is finished with common red brick around the entire house. Walls are of wood framed construction clad with tongue-and-groove lap siding. Portions of walls around the first level are also finished with brick as well as two chimneys located on the north and east elevations. Two main porches, one exposed on the south side and one covered by roof overhang on the west are both constructed of brick. The overhang at the west porch is supported by three wood columns which are decorated with wood brackets. Two smaller brick landings are located at each door on the south

side of the house. The left landing of the two includes a plywood and wood frame wheelchair ramp added sometime after 1950 by Mrs. Burbank. Four exterior doors exist. Each door opens into one of the major rooms on the first floor. Two doors on the south side are glazed with hexagonal shaped panes and are flanked on each side by narrow windows. The west porch door is glazed with a single large pane incorporating an etched design. One more door on the east side contains glass panes on the upper portion only. All windows are rectangular and glass is divided into small squares, except for one small round window located at the upper middle of the south elevation. The roof is covered with overhangs and windows and doors are trimmed simply in pine or fir. A pair of decorative iron brackets adorn the dormer overhang on the south elevation. A brick wall attached to the east side and porch ties the house to the central outdoor patio. Presently, the house is painted white and the roof is a charcoal grey.

Interior Description:

The first floor is organized into four rooms, a living room (southwest), parlor (northwest), kitchen (Northeast), and dining room (southeast). The living room, largest of all rooms, contains a stairway in the northeast corner and is connected to the dining room directly by a single swinging door. The parlor is accessible on the north side to the living room through a pair of sliding doors. The kitchen adjoins the parlor and dining room each by single swinging doors. A small separated toilet room sits on the east porch, adjacent to the kitchen exterior door.

The stairway, which is finished in varnished oak, is open to the living room for five steps along the north wall, then turns 90 degrees into a stairwell, paneled in oak, and arrives at a hallway located along the south side of the second floor. The hallway connects two end bedrooms and a middle bedroom and bathroom. Part of the south wall of the east bedroom extends to form a dormer.

A built-in shelf in the hall and the south wall of the east bedroom form a second dormer. The second floor covers only the same area as the living room and dining room below. The two story and parlor room portions of the house appear to be the original structure while the kitchen was added at some later date.

Floors in the house are primarily varnished oak-strip flooring except for the kitchen which is sheet vinyl and the bathroom which is ceramic tile. In the parlor the hearth is finished in brick. A four-and-one-half foot portion of flooring across the width of the east end of the dining room is tiled in front of the fireplace. Interior walls are plaster. Most walls are wall-papered except for the kitchen and upstairs bathroom, which is painted with some ceramic tile. Ceilings are painted plaster and flat except for the second floor where the ceilings slope downwardly where required to accommodate the dormer roofs. Walls are generally trimmed with fir baseboards, and fir wainscot and cornice trim in some rooms. Interior doors and windows are cased typically in painted fir with a cornice piece at the head and simple rails and sills. The sliding doors between the living room and parlor have carved wood turns integrated into the upper panels. The door between the living room and dining room includes glass with a floral etched design in the upper panel.

A brick fireplace sheathed with wood and faced with tile sits in the middle of the parlor's north wall. It stands four-and-one-half feet high terminating at an oak mantel. Flanking the fireplace is a built-in book shelf. A brick fireplace centered on the east wall of the dining room sits in a brick wall with a protruding oak mantel above. The kitchen contains a small pantry and a broom closet, as well as a built-in china cabinet and cool storage cabinet.

Throughout the first floor there is use of decorative ceramic tiles on walls and the parlor fireplace. The top portion of the living room wall contains a continuous band of tiles in place of a cornice. These tiles depict scenes

from the story of Don Quixote by Cervantes. Every room in the house has at least one overhead surface-mounted glass chandelier light fixture. Two light sconces are attached to the wall above the parlor fireplace. Heating is provided by the fireplaces and space heaters.

Site and Surroundings:

The house sits on a four-acre site adjacent to two other structures; the Greenhouse to the south and the Carriage House to the southeast. These three structures are accessible through a common central patio. The remainder of the site contains trees, shrubs, paths, walls and trellises which form a gentle and curving yet organized landscape.

PART III PROJECT INFORMATION

House:

Plans for the Burbank House remain as use as a museum and local focus point for an important historic legacy from the life and work of Luther Burbank. Future building work to the entire property includes converting the existing Carriage House into a formal museum and returning the house to a nearly original state.

Survey:

This project is part of the preservation work undertaken by the Luther Burbank Property Advisory Committee of the City of Santa Rosa. The work was done in accordance with the standards of the National Park Service Historic American Buildings Survey. This project was funded by a grant from the Sonoma County

Landmarks Commission. The grant was administered for the City of Santa Rosa by Kenneth Blackman, City Manager, and Charles Hoefer, Director of Recreation and Parks. The field inspection and documentation was performed under the direction of Wayne Gehrke by the architectural firm of Group 4/Architecture, Research and Planning, Inc. of Santa Rosa and South San Francisco. Survey and drawing work was performed by Wayne Gehrke, Robert Razzo and Tim Carter. Historical information was compiled with the assistance of Daniel Markwyn, Sonoma State University. Work on the project began in July 1982 and was completed in November 1982.